



**BERRY
STREET**

Believing In Children,
Young People, Families
& Their Future.



..... **Our Story**

Our Story



Berry Street exists to help those experiencing poverty, violence and abuse, and to help families stay together in safe and healthy homes, so they can create the future they imagine for themselves.

Our organisation was founded on leading social and systemic change. We began in 1877, when a group of courageous women defied the social norms of the day to care for mothers and babies who had been abandoned.

Despite the positive changes we've seen, for some young people and their families, life is getting worse. More children are being removed from home than ever before. More young people are disengaging from school. 1 in 4 young Australians meet the criteria for psychological distressⁱ, and 15-24 year olds have a higher proportion of mental health conditions than any other age groupⁱⁱ.

Our goal is to see more children safe with families who know how to nurture and support them; vulnerable learners connected to education so they can reach their potential in life; and less family violence in our communities, with more support for victim-survivors to recover.

The Challenge



Across all our services we see the increased impact of social and financial pressures, family violence and worsening mental health. The effects of the pandemic have added to the pressures already felt by vulnerable children and families. Children and young people who are struggling at school continue to be left behind. The number of children removed from their homes by Child Protection continues to increase.

Underlying this is trauma from the impacts of poverty, violence and abuse. We now know that traumatic experiences change the way our brains work. Trauma makes it difficult to regulate our thoughts and emotions, leaving us hyper-alert to danger. When we don't feel safe, we can't pay attention at school, we can't care properly for our children, and we can't deal with challenges in life.

Meanwhile, most support systems only kick in when families reach crisis point. We want to shift priorities so that children and families get support when they need it, and victim-survivors of family violence get the help they need to recover.



ⁱ Seven year Youth Mental Health Report, Mission Australia, 2012-2018

ⁱⁱ National Health Survey, Australian Bureau Statistics, 2017-18

Our Approach

The good news is there has never been greater awareness of the importance of addressing trauma, and we now have tried and tested approaches that can change lives.

1. Healing Trauma

With the right help and support, children can recover from trauma and lead healthy, happy lives. The evidence-based, world-leading services provided by our **Take Two** program engage all the people and systems around a child to support their recovery. We also train others in delivering trauma-informed approaches.

"Makayla* experienced severe neglect as a child, often going without food or adequate clothing. We had to work closely with Makayla and her foster carers to address Makayla's fear of abandonment and shame. Makayla is starting to build relationships with others and for the first time feels that she is safe, and that she belongs."

– Bodhi, Take Two Clinician



2. Addressing Family Violence

We want to make sure that every person experiencing family violence can access support and safety. As Victoria's largest provider of family violence services, through programs like **Restoring Childhood** we help children and their caregivers make sense of the trauma they have experienced, so they can recover and feel safe again.

"This year has been one of the hardest of my life, but I always knew I had people in my corner. I knew I could call or text you at any time if things escalated, and that no matter what, I had someone on my side with the same goal – to get myself and my children the safe and happy life we deserve."

– Victim-survivor working with Berry Street



3. Providing a Safe Home

Sometimes it isn't safe for children to stay with their families. We provide homes for children including foster, kinship and residential care, and for children and young people who have experienced significant, repeated trauma, we've introduced the **Teaching Family Model (TFM)**. TFM is the only evidence-based model of residential care worldwide, helping children and young people recover from trauma in a family-style setting. We're the first accredited agency in Australia to implement TFM, and we are supporting other organisations to do the same.

"My life is really good. This is a place I know I can be safe. I'm really happy."

– TFM young person



4. Trauma-informed Education

The education system is not well-placed to meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma. Our education programs, including the **Berry Street School**, help children achieve their full potential, particularly those with complex, unmet learning needs. The **Berry Street Education Model** is training teachers in trauma-informed, strengths-based education, providing a sense of safety and connection to improve wellbeing and academic outcomes for all students.

"For the first time I feel supported at school. I can complete my work knowing that my teachers want me to succeed and I can be myself."

– Bella, Year 12 student, Berry Street School



5. Proactive Care for Families and Communities

Helping children and families at an earlier stage can create safe homes and connected communities so that generations of families lead happy, healthy lives. Where there is a risk of children or young people entering out-of-home care, we help keep families together safely through evidence-based family therapy programs like **Multisystemic Therapy (MST)**.

"When I was struggling, I picked up the phone and Sue was able to talk me through the plan, keep us all calm, and help us when things were bad. She was there for us, 24/7."

– Jenny*, MST participant



* The names of the children and the families we work with have been changed, and models are used in our photographs to protect their identities.

Creating the Future We Imagine



In our envisaged future, families have the support and tools to stay together safely, and children and adults have the chance to recover from violence and trauma. With connection and belonging, children are healthy, happy and free to engage in school; to learn, to achieve, and to create the future they imagine for themselves.

With the support of our partners and funders, we continue to imagine and create a different future - a better future - for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. If this is the future that you imagine, we would love to talk to you!

Reach out to our team today if you would like to learn more about Berry Street's work and how you can join us.



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We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands, skies and waterways of Australia.



Berry Street is committed to the principles of social justice. Berry Street supports the LGBTIQ+ community and celebrates diversity.